

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)
)
 PLAINTIFF,)
)
 -VERSUS-) 3:18-CR-00078
) MAY 14, 2019
 RONALD ALLEN WRIGHT,) COLUMBIA, SC
)
 DEFENDANT.)
 -----)

BEFORE THE HONORABLE MARY GEIGER LEWIS
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE, PRESIDING
SENTENCING HEARING

A P P E A R A N C E S:

FOR THE GOVERNMENT: TOMMIE PEARSON, AUSA
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
1441 MAIN STREET, SUITE 500
COLUMBIA, SC 29201

FOR THE DEFENDANT: MARK REAGAN CALHOUN, ESQ.
CALHOUN LAW FIRM
714 EAST MAIN STREET
LEXINGTON, SC 29072

COURT REPORTER: KATHLEEN RICHARDSON, RMR, CRR
UNITED STATES COURT REPORTER
901 RICHLAND STREET
COLUMBIA, SC 29201

STENOTYPE/COMPUTER-AIDED TRANSCRIPTION

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1 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT.

2 MR. PEARSON: THANK YOU, YOUR HONOR. AT THIS TIME
3 THE GOVERNMENT CALLS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VERSUS
4 RONALD ALLEN WRIGHT ON CRIMINAL NUMBER 3:18-078. YOUR HONOR,
5 WE ARE HERE THIS MORNING FOR SENTENCING IN THIS MATTER. I DO
6 BELIEVE THAT THE DEFENSE HAS TWO OUTSTANDING OBJECTIONS TO
7 THE PRESENTENCE REPORT AND I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE DEFENDANT
8 HAS FILED AN ADDITIONAL MOTION TO TERMINATE HIS COUNSEL THAT
9 I DO BELIEVE THE COURT WILL LIKELY HAVE TO TAKE UP. I'M NOT
10 SURE IN WHAT ORDER YOU'D LIKE TO DO THAT.

11 THE COURT: RIGHT. I THINK WE PROBABLY NEED TO
12 TAKE UP THE STATUS OF COUNSEL ISSUE FIRST, SO I'LL JUST ASK
13 YOU ALL TO STEP OUTSIDE.

14 (WHEREUPON, A SEALED HEARING WAS CONDUCTED THAT IS NOT A
15 PART OF THIS TRANSCRIPT.)

16 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. MR. PEARSON, I HEARD FROM
17 MR. CALHOUN AND ALSO FROM MR. WRIGHT ON ALL OF THESE MOTIONS
18 AND WHAT HIS BASIS IS, AND HE HAS NO BASIS TO SUPPORT THE
19 GRANTING OF ANY OF THESE MOTIONS, SO WE'LL PROCEED WITH
20 SENTENCING.

21 MR. PEARSON: OKAY. YOUR HONOR, I DO BELIEVE --
22 DOES THAT INCLUDE I GUESS -- THE FIRST OBJECTION TO THE
23 PRESENTENCE REPORT APPEARED NOT TO NECESSARILY HAVE ANY
24 BEARING ON THE CALCULATION OF THE GUIDELINES. BUT THE SECOND
25 OBJECTION UNDER A LIBERAL READING COULD BE AN OBJECTION TO

1 JURISDICTION, AND I WAS WONDERING IF THE COURT WOULD LIKE THE
2 GOVERNMENT TO RESPOND TO THAT ONE.

3 THE COURT: WELL, LET'S FIRST -- LET ME GO OVER
4 WHAT I HAVE LOOKED AT AND ASK MR. WRIGHT IF HE HAS HAD ENOUGH
5 TIME TO DO ALL THIS. ALL RIGHT. I HAVE LOOKED OVER A
6 REVISED PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT, AND THAT'S REALLY
7 THE ONLY THING I HAVE LOOKED AT. OBVIOUSLY I TRIED THE CASE
8 WHERE MR. WRIGHT WAS CONVICTED, SO I'M FAMILIAR WITH IT.

9 IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I NEED TO LOOK AT BEFORE WE
10 PROCEED?

11 MR. PEARSON: NOTHING FROM THE GOVERNMENT, YOUR
12 HONOR.

13 THE COURT: OKAY. ANYTHING FROM THE DEFENSE?

14 MR. CALHOUN: NO, YOUR HONOR.

15 THE COURT: OKAY. ALL RIGHT. MR. WRIGHT, SIR,
16 WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND? SIR, HAVE YOU HAD SUFFICIENT
17 OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE REVISED PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION
18 REPORT AND DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR LAWYER?

19 THE DEFENDANT: NO.

20 THE COURT: YOU HAVE NOT?

21 THE DEFENDANT: NO, SIR. I DON'T EVEN KNOW -- I
22 HAVEN'T EVEN SEEN THE OBJECTION HE EVEN TURNED IN FOR ME.

23 THE COURT: BUT WHAT ABOUT THE REPORT? HAVE YOU
24 SEEN THE REPORT?

25 THE DEFENDANT: I SAW THE FIRST -- I SAW THE FIRST

1 REPORT, FIRST REPORT WHICH I WENT OVER AND POINT OUT SOME
2 THINGS TO HIM.

3 THE COURT: RIGHT.

4 THE DEFENDANT: AND THEN HE WAS SUPPOSED TO MADE
5 OBJECTION TO IT, WHATEVER.

6 THE COURT: RIGHT.

7 THE DEFENDANT: I DID NOT SEE THOSE OBJECTIVE. I
8 DIDN'T HEAR BACK FROM HIM.

9 THE COURT: OKAY.

10 THE DEFENDANT: ONLY TIME HE CAME BACK TO ME WAS
11 WHEN HE BROUGHT ME A RESPONSE, WHICH WAS LAST WEEK.

12 THE COURT: UH-HUH.

13 THE DEFENDANT: A RESPONSE FROM THE PROBATION
14 OFFICE. SO I HAVE NOT SEEN THE INFORMATION WHEREAS WHEN HE
15 FIRST BROUGHT IT TO ME, HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AT THE NEXT
16 WEEK TO GO OVER IT AND I DIDN'T SEE HIM UNTIL LIKE, YOU KNOW,
17 IT WAS SO MANY DAYS, WAS CLOSE TO NUMBER OF DAYS THAT I HAD
18 TO RESPOND TO IT. AND THEN AFTER THAT, I DIDN'T SEE HIM NO
19 MORE UNTIL LAST WEEK WHEN HE CAME AND ALL HE BROUGHT ME WAS A
20 RESPONSE TO -- SO I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY OBJECTION THAT HE PUT IN
21 IT.

22 THE COURT: OKAY. WELL, I DIDN'T ASK YOU ABOUT
23 WHETHER YOU'D SEEN REALLY THE OBJECTIONS. I ASKED YOU IF YOU
24 HAD SEEN THE REVISED PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT. I
25 MEAN, YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE BECAUSE YOU TALKED WITH YOUR LAWYER

1 ABOUT SOME OBJECTIONS THAT YOU WANTED TO LODGE; CORRECT?

2 THE DEFENDANT: NO. THAT WAS THE FIRST ONE.

3 THE COURT: WELL, THE ONLY CHANGE THAT WAS MADE TO
4 THE REPORT WAS TO CORRECT SOMETHING THAT YOU POINTED OUT.
5 WOULD YOU LIKE SOME MORE TIME TO LOOK OVER THE REPORT WITH
6 YOUR LAWYER?

7 THE DEFENDANT: YEAH, BECAUSE I -- I DON'T KNOW
8 WHAT -- WHAT -- WHAT HE OBJECTED TO BECAUSE I HAD SEVERAL
9 THINGS I REJECT -- OBJECTED TO THAT. AND HE DIDN'T BRING IT
10 BACK TO SHOW ME THAT HE DID AS I SAY.

11 THE COURT: WELL, HE -- HE DOESN'T HAVE TO DO AS
12 YOU SAY. HE HAS TO LODGE OBJECTIONS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE.

13 MR. CALHOUN, WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A -- MAYBE WE CAN GO
14 ON WITH THE OTHER SENTENCING THAT I HAVE SCHEDULED AND
15 CONTINUE THIS FOR YOU TO HAVE A BRIEF MEETING WITH MR. WRIGHT
16 UNLESS YOU WANT TO EXPLAIN TO ME THAT YOU HAVE BEEN OVER WITH
17 HIM...

18 MR. CALHOUN: HE HAD THE REPORT FOR WEEKS TO REVIEW
19 IT. I PROVIDED HIM THE REPORT. HE HAD IT FOR WEEKS TO
20 REVIEW IT AND WHAT --

21 THE COURT: OKAY.

22 MR. CALHOUN: -- BEFORE I RETURNED. I THINK THE
23 DAY BEFORE THE OBJECTIONS WERE DUE WE MET, I WROTE DOWN THE
24 OBJECTIONS THAT HE WANTED ME TO MAKE, HE CONFIRMED THOSE WERE
25 THE OBJECTIONS HE WANTED ME TO MAKE, I MADE THE OBJECTIONS,

1 AND I PROVIDED HIM WITH A COPY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE
2 TO THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ALSO LISTS THE OBJECTIONS IN WRITING
3 --

4 THE COURT: RIGHT. RIGHT.

5 MR. CALHOUN: -- WHICH WE HAD ALREADY MADE. I
6 DON'T SEE ANYTHING -- ANY CHANGES IN THE REPORT THAT HE NEEDS
7 TO MAKE, THAT HE NEEDS TO READ. IT'S THE SAME REPORT.

8 THE COURT: OKAY. OKAY. ALL RIGHT. WELL
9 MR. WRIGHT, SO YOU HAVE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE
10 PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT -- I MEAN THE REVISED
11 PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT. YOU HAVE HAD AN
12 OPPORTUNITY TO POINT OUT YOUR OBJECTIONS TO YOUR LAWYER AND
13 HE HAS RESPONDED BY FILING THOSE OBJECTIONS.

14 DO YOU WANT ANY MORE TIME BEFORE WE CONTINUE WITH YOUR
15 SENTENCING TO TALK WITH HIM ABOUT IT?

16 THE DEFENDANT: YES, BECAUSE, YOUR HONOR, I -- I
17 STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT HE SAID BECAUSE I TOLD HIM ALSO WHEN HE
18 CAME TO SEE ME AFTER HAVING IT FOR ABOUT A WEEK OR TWO, I
19 TOLD HIM THAT I OBJECTED TO THE WHOLE ENTIRE PRESENTENCE
20 REPORT ANY WAY.

21 THE COURT: OKAY. OKAY. ALL RIGHT. SO YOU HAVE
22 THEN OBVIOUSLY BEEN OVER IT. HAS MR. CALHOUN ANSWERED ALL
23 YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REPORT, I MEAN, IF YOU HAD ANY?

24 THE DEFENDANT: FAR AS I KNOW, LIKE I SAY, I -- I
25 DON'T KNOW WHAT HE PUT IN AS FAR AS --

1 THE COURT: OKAY.

2 THE DEFENDANT: -- HOW HE WORDED ANYTHING. I --

3 THE COURT: OKAY.

4 THE DEFENDANT: -- NOT SURE OF THAT. ALL I KNOW IS
5 THE PRESENTENCE REPORT I DID HAVE A WEEK OR SO, GO OVER THAT.

6 THE COURT: OKAY.

7 THE DEFENDANT: AND BUT AS FAR AS WHAT HE PUT IN,
8 AS FAR AS THE OBJECTION, I HAVE NO CLUE WHAT'S -- WHAT HE'S
9 STATED.

10 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. THANK YOU. MR. CALHOUN,
11 YOU HAVE BEEN OVER THE CONTENTS OF THIS WITH HIM?

12 MR. CALHOUN: I HAVE.

13 THE COURT: OKAY. AND YOU HAVE SHARED WITH HIM THE
14 OBJECTIONS THAT WERE MADE?

15 MR. CALHOUN: I HAVE.

16 THE COURT: AS WELL AS THE RESPONSE FROM THE
17 GOVERNMENT TO YOUR OBJECTIONS?

18 MR. CALHOUN: YES, YOUR HONOR.

19 THE COURT: OKAY. ALL RIGHT. VERY GOOD THEN. ALL
20 RIGHT. WELL, LET'S TAKE UP THOSE OBJECTIONS. AND YOU CAN BE
21 SEATED, MR. WRIGHT.

22 THE FIRST OBJECTION -- NOW, THE FIRST OBJECTION WAS WHAT
23 WAS IN -- WAS ACTUALLY AN ERROR IN A NAME; IS THAT RIGHT?
24 THAT HE DENIES HE EVER -- NO, EXCUSE ME. I'M GETTING THIS
25 MIXED UP WITH SOMETHING. OKAY. LET ME HEAR YOUR FIRST

1 OBJECTION.

2 MR. CALHOUN, WOULD YOU LIKE -- I'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU
3 ABOUT YOUR OBJECTIONS.

4 MR. CALHOUN: PARAGRAPH NUMBER SEVEN, YOUR HONOR.

5 THE COURT: YES.

6 MR. CALHOUN: OKAY. MR. WRIGHT SIMPLY STATED THAT
7 HE THOUGHT THEY HAD THE WRONG NAME OF THE PROBATION AGENT WHO
8 HE MET WITH ON A PARTICULAR DATE.

9 THE COURT: OKAY. NOW, WAS THAT -- THAT WAS TAKEN
10 CARE OF IN THE REVISED REPORT; CORRECT? SO THAT'S NOT REALLY
11 AN ISSUE ANY LONGER. ALL RIGHT. THE SECOND OBJECTION, LET
12 ME HEAR FROM YOU ON THAT.

13 MR. CALHOUN: WELL, MR. WRIGHT OBJECTS TO THIS
14 INFORMATION WHICH WAS THE SAME INFORMATION PROVIDED IN HIS
15 BOND REVOCATION HEARING THAT HE HAD BEEN POSING AS AN
16 ATTORNEY AFTER HE HAD BEEN CONVICTED OF THIS OFFENSE.

17 THE COURT: OKAY. AND ANY OTHER BASIS FOR THAT
18 OBJECTION?

19 MR. CALHOUN: NO, YOUR HONOR.

20 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. I'M GOING TO OVERRULE THAT
21 OBJECTION. ALL RIGHT. LET'S SEE. ARE THERE ANY OTHER
22 OBJECTIONS?

23 MR. CALHOUN: THERE IS ONE MORE. MR. WRIGHT
24 OBJECTED TO PARAGRAPH 14 IN THAT HE FELT THAT THOSE ISSUES
25 SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH BY THE IRS AND HE SHOULDN'T HAVE

1 BEEN PROSECUTED FOR THEM IN THIS JURISDICTION.

2 THE COURT: OKAY. ALL RIGHT. WELL OBVIOUSLY --
3 YEAH. WELL, OBVIOUSLY THIS COURT HAS JURISDICTION. TRIED
4 HIM AND HE WAS FOUND GUILTY. I'M GOING TO DENY THE -- I MEAN
5 OVERRULE THE OBJECTION. ANYTHING ELSE?

6 MR. CALHOUN: NO, YOUR HONOR.

7 THE COURT: OKAY. ALL RIGHT. HAVING DEALT WITH
8 ALL THE OBJECTIONS, I WILL NOW ADOPT THE FINDINGS THAT ARE
9 SET FORTH IN THE REVISED PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT
10 INCLUDING THE APPLICABLE STATUTORY AND GUIDELINE PROVISIONS
11 SET FORTH IN IT FOR THE PURPOSES OF DETERMINING THE
12 REASONABLENESS OF MY SENTENCE.

13 ALL RIGHT. MR. WRIGHT, PLEASE STAND, SIR.

14 (DEFENDANT COMPLIED.)

15 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. YOU WERE CONVICTED OF TWO
16 COUNTS. COUNT ONE WAS CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT WIRE FRAUD AND
17 MAIL FRAUD AND COUNT FOUR WAS FOR FILING A FALSE TAX RETURN.
18 THE STATUTORY PROVISIONS FOR THESE OFFENSES ARE AS FOLLOWS:
19 AS TO COUNT ONE, CUSTODY OF NOT MORE THAN 20 YEARS; COUNT
20 FOUR, CUSTODY OF NOT MORE THAN THREE YEARS.

21 SUPERVISED RELEASE FOR COUNT ONE IS NOT MORE THAN THREE
22 YEARS AND FOR COUNT FOUR NOT MORE THAN ONE YEAR. IT IS
23 ELIGIBLE FOR PROBATION UNDER THE STATUTES, COUNT ONE AND
24 COUNT FOUR, FOR ONE TO FIVE YEARS.

25 THERE IS A FINE TO COUNT ONE OF \$250,000 AND A FINE FOR

1 COUNT FOUR OF \$100,000. AND THERE IS A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT
2 FEE FOR EACH COUNT FOR A TOTAL OF \$200.

3 NOW, THE ADVISORY SENTENCING GUIDELINES ASSIGN THE
4 FOLLOWING TO YOUR OFFENSE. COUNT ONE HAS A BASE OFFENSE
5 LEVEL OF 29 AND COUNT FOUR HAS A BASE OFFENSE LEVEL OF EIGHT.
6 THERE ARE SPECIFIC OFFENSE CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE ADDED TO
7 COUNT TWO, TWO LEVELS, BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO REPORT INCOME.
8 THERE IS ALSO AN ADJUSTMENT FOR YOUR ROLE IN THE OFFENSE
9 WHICH ADDS TWO LEVELS. SO YOUR ADJUSTED OFFENSE LEVEL FOR
10 COUNT ONE IS 31 AND COUNT TWO IS 12. BUT WE USE THE HIGHEST
11 FOR YOUR COMBINED ADJUSTED OFFENSE LEVEL, WHICH IS 31.

12 AND YOUR CRIMINAL HISTORY CATEGORY IS ONE. IN THAT
13 SITUATION THE GUIDELINES YIELD AN IMPRISONMENT RANGE OF 108
14 TO 135 MONTHS FOLLOWED BY SUPERVISED RELEASE OF NOT MORE THAN
15 THREE YEARS FOR COUNT ONE AND NOT MORE THAN ONE YEAR FOR
16 COUNT FOUR. IT IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR PROBATION UNDER THE
17 GUIDELINES.

18 THERE IS, HOWEVER, RESTITUTION DUE ON COUNT ONE IN THE
19 AMOUNT OF \$146,090 AND FOR COUNT FOUR \$5,330 AND, AGAIN, A
20 SPECIAL ASSESSMENT FEE OF A HUNDRED DOLLARS PER COUNT FOR A
21 TOTAL OF \$200.

22 ALL RIGHT. COUNSELORS, THAT'S HOW I SEE THE APPLICABLE
23 STATUTORY AND GUIDELINE PROVISIONS. ANY OBJECTIONS, COMMENTS
24 OR CORRECTIONS?

25 MR. PEARSON: NO OBJECTIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT,

1 YOUR HONOR.

2 MR. CALHOUN: NO OBJECTIONS, YOUR HONOR.

3 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. THEN LET ME HEAR FROM
4 YOU -- YOU MAY BE SEATED. LET ME HEAR FROM YOU, MR. PEARSON,
5 ABOUT WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE SENTENCE AND SHOULD IT BE A
6 GUIDELINE SENTENCE CONSIDERING ALL THE 3553(A) FACTORS.

7 (DEFENDANT COMPLIED.)

8 MR. PEARSON: YES, YOUR HONOR. THANK YOU. THE
9 GOVERNMENT WILL BE REQUESTING A GUIDELINE SENTENCE IN THIS
10 CASE, YOUR HONOR. HOWEVER, WE DO BELIEVE THAT A
11 MID-GUIDELINE SENTENCE OF 120 MONTHS WILL BE APPROPRIATE FOR
12 MR. WRIGHT WHEN TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE 3553(A) FACTORS,
13 SPECIFICALLY THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE OFFENSE AND
14 THE HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEFENDANT.

15 YOUR HONOR, IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE TRIAL, IT HAS BEEN
16 CLEAR FROM MR. WRIGHT'S BEHAVIOR SINCE THE TRIAL UP TO AND
17 INCLUDING HIS CURRENT INCARCERATION THAT THE -- THAT HIS VERY
18 NATURE INDICATES THAT MR. WRIGHT SEEKS OUT THE MOST DESPERATE
19 INDIVIDUALS AND OFFERS THEM SOME HOPE OF GETTING OUT OF
20 FORECLOSURE OR CRUSHING DEBT.

21 HE DOES THAT BY TAKING AWAY THE ONLY FUNDS THAT THEY
22 HAVE LEFT. HE DOES THIS AND THEN FILES NONSENSE PAPERWORK
23 THAT HE KNOWS IS NOT GOING TO BE EFFECTIVE AND TAKES AWAY
24 WHATEVER MEAGER FUNDS THESE INDIVIDUALS HAVE.

25 I DO BELIEVE YOUR HONOR REMEMBERS FROM THE TRIAL THAT

1 MR. WRIGHT SPECIFICALLY TARGETED PEOPLE OF FAITH, GOING TO
2 CHURCH AND TELLING THEM THAT THEIR ANSWERS WERE -- THAT THEIR
3 PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED BY HIM AND IF THEY WOULD ONLY GIVE HIM
4 \$1500 REAL DOLLARS OR 3,000 REAL DOLLARS, THAT HE WOULD THEN
5 PURPORT THIS SYSTEM TO ELIMINATE ALL OF THEIR DEBT.

6 YOUR HONOR, I DON'T SAY THIS LIGHTLY, BUT MR. WRIGHT'S
7 BEHAVIOR IS DESPICABLE. HIS NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES ARE
8 AWFUL AND HE HAS EARNED EVERY BIT OF 120-MONTH GUIDELINE
9 SENTENCE.

10 UNDER THE 3553(A) FACTORS THE COURT SHOULD ALSO LOOK TO
11 THE NEED TO REFLECT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE OFFENSE. THE
12 GOVERNMENT WOULD ARGUE THAT IT IS A VERY SERIOUS THING FOR AN
13 INDIVIDUAL TO TARGET THESE VERY VULNERABLE AND DESPERATE
14 PEOPLE AND THAT IT IS VERY SERIOUS TO EXACERBATE THEIR
15 PROBLEMS FOR ONE'S OWN ENRICHMENT.

16 AND TO AFFORD ADEQUATE DETERRENCE TO CRIMINAL CONDUCT.
17 IT HAS BEEN CLEAR SINCE THE END OF THIS CASE THAT MR. WRIGHT
18 HAS NOT BEEN DETERRED FROM HIS CONDUCT. HE CONTINUES TO FILE
19 NONSENSE FILINGS WITH THE COURT DESPITE CLEAR ORDERS FROM
20 YOUR HONOR TO REFRAIN FROM DOING SO.

21 A CURSORY REVIEW OF HIS TIME LOCKED UP AT THE DETENTION
22 CENTER SHOWS THAT MR. WRIGHT IS CONTINUING TO PURPORT THESE
23 SAME FRAUDULENT SCHEMES AND NOW TRYING TO PURPORT HIS SYSTEM
24 AND TRANSFER IT TO OTHER INMATES. HE'S HEARD ON NUMEROUS
25 JAIL CALLS TALKING ABOUT IT. HE CERTAINLY HAS NOT LEARNED

1 ANY LESSON FROM THE TRIAL AND CLEARLY HAS NOT AT THIS POINT
2 BEEN DETERRED.

3 AND FINALLY, TO PROTECT THE -- TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC
4 FROM FURTHER CRIMES OF THE DEFENDANT. YOUR HONOR, UNDER THIS
5 3553(A) FACTOR, I'M NOT EVEN CERTAIN IF LOCKING MR. WRIGHT UP
6 IS GOING TO PREVENT HIS INFLUENCE AND HIS PREYING ON THESE
7 SORTS OF DESPERATE PEOPLE. HOWEVER, BASED ON THE SYSTEM WE
8 HAVE, THIS IS REALLY THE ONLY OPTION THAT WE HAVE FOR SOMEONE
9 LIKE MR. WRIGHT.

10 MR. WRIGHT HAS CONSISTENTLY THUMBED HIS NOSE AT THIS
11 COURT, HE HAS THUMBED HIS NOSE AT THE LAW, HE HAS THUMBED HIS
12 NOSE AT THE DOZENS OF VICTIMS THAT HE HAS MADE THEIR
13 SITUATIONS WORSE BY THROWING THEM OUT ON THE STREET. AND
14 BASED ON ALL OF THESE FACTORS IT IS THE POSITION OF THE
15 GOVERNMENT THAT A 120-MONTH SENTENCE WOULD BE SUFFICIENT BUT
16 NOT GREATER THAN NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE JUSTICE IN
17 THIS CASE.

18 *THE COURT:* ALL RIGHT. THANK YOU, MR. PEARSON.
19 ALL RIGHT. MR. CALHOUN, LET ME HEAR FROM YOU ABOUT WHAT'S AN
20 APPROPRIATE SENTENCE.

21 *MR. CALHOUN:* THANK YOU, YOUR HONOR. IT'S
22 CERTAINLY TRUE THAT MR. WRIGHT HAS DONE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO
23 HELP HIMSELF SINCE HE'S BEEN ARRESTED ON THESE CHARGES. IF
24 ANYTHING, HE'S JUST MADE THE PROBLEM WORSE. BUT THERE ARE
25 TWO THINGS THAT I BELIEVE ARE NOTEWORTHY. HE'S A 53-YEAR-OLD

1 MAN AND HE HAS NO -- PRACTICALLY NO CRIMINAL HISTORY TO SPEAK
2 OF AND HE HAS A GOOD EMPLOYMENT RECORD EXCEPT FOR THE FIVE
3 YEARS THAT HE RAN MONEY SOLUTIONS, AND THAT SAYS SOMETHING
4 ABOUT HIM.

5 THE SEMINARS THAT HE ATTENDED, YOU KNOW, THAT'S WHERE
6 THE TRAIN LEFT THE TRACKS. HE BOUGHT INTO THIS STUFF. AND I
7 BELIEVE HE REALLY STILL BELIEVES IT TO THIS DAY, BUT HE
8 BELIEVES THAT WHAT HE WAS DOING WAS LEGAL. MAYBE -- DON'T
9 KNOW IF HE THOUGHT IT WAS RIGHT OR WRONG, BUT I REALLY
10 BELIEVES HE THINKS IT WAS LEGAL.

11 SO WE HAVE A 53-YEAR-OLD MAN WITH PRACTICALLY A CLEAN
12 RECORD WHO HAS BEEN WORKING HIS ENTIRE LIFE AND HE JUST TOOK
13 A BIG DETOUR FIVE YEARS AGO. SO, A NINE-YEAR JAIL SENTENCE
14 FOR THAT GUY; IS THAT SUFFICIENT? I THINK IT IS. I MEAN, I
15 MEAN, IT'S GOING TO STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT BECAUSE HE CERTAINLY
16 HAS NEVER EXPOSED HIMSELF TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM LIKE
17 THIS BEFORE.

18 I MEAN, WHAT'S 120 MONTHS GOING TO DO? I MEAN, IS THAT
19 REALLY WHAT -- WHAT HE NEEDS TO REALIZE THE ERROR OF HIS
20 WAYS? I THINK NINE YEARS IS A SUBSTANTIAL SENTENCE. EVEN
21 THOUGH HE'S DONE NOTHING WHATSOEVER TO ENDEAR HIMSELF TO
22 ANYBODY IN THIS COURTROOM, I THINK THAT NINE YEARS IS
23 SUFFICIENT CONSIDERING HIS HISTORY -- AND HE'S NOT A
24 23-YEAR-OLD OR A 33-YEAR-OLD; HE'S 53. I JUST SUBMIT TO YOU
25 THAT THAT'S A SUBSTANTIAL PUNISHMENT FOR WHAT HE'S DONE.

1 HE DOESN'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO PAY RESTITUTION, SO HE'S
2 GOING TO HAVE TO -- I MEAN, WOULDN'T EVEN ASK YOU FOR
3 PROBATION, ESPECIALLY WHEN RESTITUTION IS SO SUBSTANTIAL.
4 BUT I ASK YOU TO GIVE HIM THE BOTTOM END OF THE GUIDELINE
5 RANGE.

6 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. THANK YOU. ALL RIGHT.
7 MR. WRIGHT? PLEASE STAND.

8 (DEFENDANT COMPLIED.)

9 THE COURT: SIR, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ADDRESS THE
10 COURT ABOUT YOUR SENTENCING, SO I'M HAPPY TO LISTEN TO
11 ANYTHING YOU WANT TO TELL ME.

12 THE DEFENDANT: MY HONOR, I DO HAVE STANDING TO
13 SPEAK; RIGHT?

14 THE COURT: I CAN'T HEAR YOU.

15 THE DEFENDANT: I DO HAVE STANDING TO SPEAK; RIGHT?

16 THE COURT: YES.

17 THE DEFENDANT: THANK YOU. YOUR HONOR, AS HE SAID,
18 I'VE BEEN A ENTREPRENEUR BASICALLY ALL MY LIFE. I WORKED FOR
19 DIFFERENT ELECTRIC COMPANIES AND THEN STARTED A BUSINESS ON A
20 20-INCH BICYCLE. AND WHEN I GOT RID OF THE COMPANY AFTER SO
21 MANY YEARS, HAD NINE TRUCKS, 16 GUYS WORKING FOR ME. THEN I
22 WENT INTO MINISTRY A LITTLE BIT, STILL DOING ELECTRICAL WORK
23 ON THE SIDE, BUT A MUCH SMALLER SCALE.

24 THEN I BEGAN TO RUN INTO DIFFERENT SITUATIONS WHERE I
25 MYSELF WENT THROUGH A TRAGIC SITUATION WITH LOSING A HOUSE

1 THAT I BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP, AND THAT DID SOMETHING TO
2 ME. AND THEN AS TIME WENT ON, I BEGIN TO DO NETWORKING AND
3 EVERYBODY'S CALLING ME FOR HELP WITH MORTGAGE AND STUFF, AND
4 LIKE I -- I -- YOU KNOW, I DON'T DO THAT, I JUST DO
5 NETWORKING.

6 SO EVENTUALLY I STARTED RESEARCHING AND GOT INVITED TO
7 SOME SEMINARS AND STUFF LIKE THAT. AND I FELT THE PAIN I
8 WENT THROUGH WITH MY FAMILY WHEN WE LOST OUR HOUSE, SO I WAS
9 NEVER INTENDED ON HURTING ANYBODY BECAUSE WHEN I STARTED
10 DOING THIS, IT WAS JUST OUT OF KINDNESS, YOU KNOW. IF YOU
11 CHARGING SOMEBODY \$600 BUT YOU FIGHT WITH THEIR CASE FOR TWO
12 TO THREE YEARS OFF THAT ONE \$600, I DON'T SEE HOW THAT COULD
13 BE SCAMMING SOMEBODY.

14 AND THEN AFTER GETTING THE WORKLOAD TO A POINT WHERE IF
15 I'M WORKING SOMEBODY HOUSE SITUATION HELPING THEM FOR TWO TO
16 THREE YEARS, \$600 IS NOT GOING TO COVER MY SALARY. I GOT TO
17 PAY THE PEOPLE THAT'S WORKING FOR ME. SO THAT'S WHEN I BEGIN
18 TO GO UP ON THE PRICE.

19 IT WASN'T THAT I WAS TAKING MONEY FROM PEOPLE THAT THEY
20 COULDN'T PAY THEY BILL. THEY WERE ALREADY MONTHS, YEARS
21 BEHIND IN THEY MORTGAGE AND THEY SAW WAS BENEFICIAL FOR ME TO
22 HELP BECAUSE -- THE TRIAL IS OVER NOW BUT I HAD PEOPLE THAT
23 WAS LINED UP TO TESTIFY BUT THEY REFUSE TO SUBPOENA THEM THAT
24 WOULD HAVE SHINE A DIFFERENT LIGHT ON THE WHOLE SITUATION.

25 SO, IT WASN'T A SITUATION WHERE I WAS JUST PREYING ON

1 PEOPLE AND NOT THE WAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATING
2 THAT I WENT TO CHURCH PEOPLE. NO. IT JUST HAPPENED TO BE
3 SOME PEOPLE WERE CHURCH PEOPLE, BUT NO, THESE WERE
4 HIGHLY-EDUCATED PEOPLE, PEOPLE WHO CAN GO AND DO THEIR OWN
5 RESEARCH IN WHICH I TOLD SEVERAL CLIENTS, I SAY, DON'T
6 BELIEVE ME, GO DO YOUR RESEARCH FOR YOURSELF, MAKE A
7 DECISION, AND THAT'S HOW I OPERATED. BUT I DIDN'T GET -- IT
8 DID NOT GET TO DISPLAY INSIDE THE TRIAL INTENTIONALLY
9 BASICALLY.

10 SO, THAT IS WHY EVERYTHING IS LIKE IT IS. BUT AT THE
11 SAME TIME ONCE I GOT IN CONTACT WITH THESE SEMINARS AND THEY
12 BEGIN TO SHOW ME DIFFERENT THINGS, SHOW ME CASE LAWS FROM THE
13 SUPREME COURT, SHOW ME CODES, I HAD NO, NO REASON TO BELIEVE
14 THAT I WAS DOING ANYTHING WRONG. EVEN NOW TO THE POINT WHERE
15 I HAVE ACTUALLY HAD JUDGE TO COME AND TELL ME TO DO A BRIEF
16 FOR THIS PERSON BUT YOU DON'T SIGN IT, JUST LET THEM SIGN IT.

17 SO WHAT IS KIND OF MESSAGE THAT SENDING TO ME? I'M
18 HELPING PEOPLE. THE JUDGE KNOWS IT. THE JUDGE TELL ME TO
19 WRITE THE BRIEF BUT DON'T SIGN IT, HAVE THEM TO SIGN IT. YOU
20 KNOW, IT'S UNFAIR.

21 AND EVEN NOW TO THE POINT WHERE, YOU KNOW, I HAVE TO
22 FILE A -- A -- A -- A SUIT FOR INSUFFICIENT COUNSEL BECAUSE
23 YOU SEE IT IN MY RECORD WHERE I HAD 18 GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE
24 ATTORNEY THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE REPRESENTING ME IN TRIAL.
25 WHO LET THE BALL DROP? I NEVER WENT THROUGH ANY -- ANY --

1 ANY OF THE DISCOVERY, NEVER WENT THROUGH WHO GOING TO BE
2 TESTIFYING, NEVER WENT THROUGH WHAT'S GOING TO BE PRESENTED
3 INSIDE THE -- TO TRIAL, ANY EXHIBITS. BUT THAT WAS SUPPOSED
4 TO BE MY COUNSEL.

5 THE COURT: OKAY. ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT ME TO
6 CONSIDER?

7 THE DEFENDANT: AND SO, THE FACT THAT I UNDERSTOOD
8 THE CASE LAWS THAT WAS GIVEN TO ME, I VERIFIED THEM, I WENT
9 GOT COPIES FROM THE LIBRARY CONGRESS IN DC, BUT NONE OF THAT
10 STOOD FOR ANYTHING. AND THE FACT THAT I WAS BASED IT UPON
11 INTERNATIONAL LAW THAT SAID YOU CAN DO THIS, YOU COULD DO
12 THAT--

13 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE
14 INTERNATIONAL LAW?

15 THE DEFENDANT: UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW THE CODES
16 THAT WERE USED LIKE WHEN THE AGENTS GOT ON THE STAND, SAID
17 THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT UCC1 THAT THROUGH THEIR AGENT -- THEY
18 DON'T KNOW WHAT THE UCC3-415--

19 THE COURT: RIGHT. OKAY. THE INTERNATIONAL LAW
20 AND THE UNIFORM COMMERCIAL CODE. ANYTHING ELSE? ANYTHING
21 ELSE YOU WANT ME TO CONSIDER?

22 THE DEFENDANT: I WAS -- EVERYTHING WAS BASED UPON
23 WHAT I KNOW TO BE TRUE AND AT THE SAME TIME IN THE MIDST OF
24 THAT, I CLAIMED MY NATIONALITY AND I WENT BACK TO LAND OFF
25 SEA BECAUSE RIGHT NOW I'M IN THE WELL.

1 THE COURT: OKAY. ALL RIGHT. THANK YOU. ALL
2 RIGHT. I BELIEVE THAT WE CORRECTLY CALCULATED THE GUIDELINES
3 AND I HAVE HEARD FROM BOTH SIDES ABOUT WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE
4 SENTENCE IN THIS CASE. I'M VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE MATTER. I
5 TRIED THE CASE. I LISTENED TO THE TESTIMONY OF SOME OF THE
6 VICTIMS.

7 AND I THINK MR. PEARSON IS RIGHT ABOUT WHAT HE'S POINTED
8 OUT; THAT NOT ONLY HAS THIS BEEN JUST A TERRIBLE TAKING
9 ADVANTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO WERE AT THEIR MOST VULNERABLE POINT,
10 BUT THE WHOLE ATTITUDE ABOUT NOT RESPECTING THE LAW, NOT
11 RESPECTING THIS COURT, NOT RESPECTING THE FACT THAT WE LIVE
12 IN A CIVILIZED SOCIETY AND WE ARE GOVERNED BY THE RULE OF LAW
13 AND THE WILLINGNESS OF MR. WRIGHT TO JUST SOMEHOW CONVINCE
14 HIMSELF THAT ALL THAT DOESN'T APPLY TO HIM IS ASTOUNDING AND
15 UNFORTUNATELY IN THIS CASE IT REALLY DID HURT, HURT A LOT OF
16 PEOPLE.

17 SO I THINK A GUIDELINE SENTENCE IS APPROPRIATE. I ALSO
18 AGREE WITH MR. PEARSON THAT I'M NOT REALLY SURE IF THERE IS A
19 SENTENCE THAT'S SUFFICIENT TO DETER HIM FROM ENGAGING IN THIS
20 CONDUCT. APPARENTLY HE'S STILL DOING IT WHILE HE'S
21 INCARCERATED.

22 BUT AS HE ALSO POINTED OUT, WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF OTHER
23 OPTIONS FOR MR. WRIGHT. AND CERTAINLY IT WILL BE MORE
24 DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO CONTINUE HIS FRAUDS BEHIND BARS THAN IT
25 WOULD BE IF HE WERE OUT AMONGST CIVILIZED PEOPLE AGAIN.

1 SO I HAVE CONSIDERED REALLY ALL OF THE 3553(A) FACTORS,
2 BUT THE DETERRENCE, PUNISHMENT, PROMOTING RESPECT FOR THE
3 LAW, THOSE ARE THE THINGS THAT I THINK MAKES A GUIDELINE
4 SENTENCE REALLY APPROPRIATE IN HIS SITUATION. I HAVE ALSO
5 CONSIDERED SOME OTHER DEFENDANTS.

6 I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT I DID WITH MS. JACKSON, WHO
7 WAS A CO-DEFENDANT IN THE CASE. I HAVE LOOKED AT THE
8 TREATMENT, SENTENCES THAT I HAVE HANDED OUT FOR OTHER PEOPLE
9 WHO ENGAGED IN SIMILAR CONDUCT, AND I THINK TAKING ALL OF
10 THAT INTO CONSIDERATION THAT A GUIDELINE SENTENCE IS
11 APPROPRIATE.

12 SO HAVING CALCULATED AND CONSIDERED THE ADVISORY
13 SENTENCING GUIDELINES AND HAVING ALSO CONSIDERED THE RELEVANT
14 STATUTORY SENTENCING FACTORS CONTAINED IN 18 USC 3553(A) IT
15 IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT THAT THE DEFENDANT, RONALD ALLEN
16 WRIGHT, IS HEREBY COMMITTED TO THE CUSTODY OF THE BUREAU OF
17 PRISONS TO BE IMPRISONED FOR A TERM OF 120 MONTHS.

18 THIS SENTENCE CONSISTS OF 120 MONTHS AS TO COUNT ONE AND
19 36 MONTHS AS TO COUNT FOUR; THOSE TERMS TO RUN CONCURRENTLY.

20 AS TO COUNT ONE, THE DEFENDANT SHALL PAY MANDATORY
21 RESTITUTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$146,90 TO THE VICTIMS IN THIS
22 CASE THROUGH THE CLERK, US DISTRICT COURT, 901 RICHLAND
23 STREET, COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, 29201. PAYMENTS ARE DUE
24 AND PAYABLE IMMEDIATELY, BUT RESTITUTION -- INTEREST ON THE
25 RESTITUTION IS WAIVED.

1 IT APPEARS THAT MR. WRIGHT DOES NOT HAVE THE ABILITY TO
2 PAY A FINE AND THEREFORE THE FINE IS WAIVED, BUT HE SHALL PAY
3 THE MANDATORY SPECIAL ASSESSMENT FEE OF \$200 WHICH CONSISTS
4 OF \$100 TO EACH OF THE COUNTS WHICH IS ALSO DUE AND PAYABLE
5 IMMEDIATELY.

6 UPON RELEASE FROM IMPRISONMENT THE DEFENDANT SHALL BE
7 PLACED ON SUPERVISED RELEASE FOR A TERM OF THREE YEARS. THIS
8 TERM CONSISTS OF THREE YEARS AS TO COUNT ONE AND ONE YEAR AS
9 TO COUNT FOUR; THOSE TERMS TO RUN CONCURRENTLY.

10 WITHIN 72 HOURS OF RELEASE FROM THE CUSTODY OF THE
11 BUREAU OF PRISONS THE DEFENDANT SHALL REPORT IN PERSON TO THE
12 PROBATION OFFICE IN THE DISTRICT TO WHICH HE IS RELEASED.
13 AND WHILE ON SUPERVISED RELEASE, HE SHALL COMPLY WITH THE
14 MANDATORY AND STANDARD CONDITIONS OF SUPERVISION OUTLINED IN
15 18 USC 3583(D) AND HE SHALL ALSO COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING
16 SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR THE REASONS THAT ARE SET FORTH IN THE
17 PRESENTENCE REPORT THAT HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN ADOPTED AS THE
18 FINDINGS OF FACTS FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SENTENCING.

19 AS TO COUNT ONE, THE DEFENDANT SHALL PAY ANY REMAINING
20 MANDATORY RESTITUTION TO THE VICTIMS IN THIS CASE AT A
21 MONTHLY RATE OF \$300 TO COMMENCE 30 DAYS AFTER HIS RELEASE
22 FROM INCARCERATION.

23 AS TO COUNT FOUR, THE DEFENDANT SHALL PAY \$5,330 IN
24 RESTITUTION TO THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE IN MINIMUM
25 MONTHLY INSTALLMENTS OF \$150 TO COMMENCE 30 DAYS AFTER HIS

1 RELEASE FROM INCARCERATION AND THE DEFENDANT MUST PROVIDE THE
2 PROBATION OFFICER WITH ACCESS TO ANY REQUESTED FINANCIAL
3 INFORMATION AND AUTHORIZE THE RELEASE OF THAT INFORMATION AND
4 THE PROBATION OFFICE MAY SHARE THAT FINANCIAL INFORMATION
5 WITH THE US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE.

6 AND FINALLY, THE DEFENDANT MUST NOT INCUR NEW CREDIT
7 CHARGES OR OPEN ADDITIONAL LINES OF CREDIT WITHOUT THE
8 APPROVAL OF THE PROBATION OFFICER.

9 SO AS TO COUNTS ONE AND FOUR OF THE INDICTMENT, I FIND
10 THIS SENTENCE IS REASONABLE UNDER THE FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES
11 OF THIS CASE AND THAT IT IS SUFFICIENT BUT NOT GREATER THAN
12 NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THE PURPOSES OF SENTENCING.

13 ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS ANYONE WANTS TO BRING TO MY
14 ATTENTION?

15 MR. PEARSON: NONE FROM THE GOVERNMENT, YOUR HONOR.

16 THE COURT: OKAY. AND YOU ONLY PROCEEDED ON COUNTS
17 ONE AND FOUR AT TRIAL; RIGHT? YEAH.

18 MR. PEARSON: THAT'S RIGHT. YES, YOUR HONOR.

19 THE COURT: ALL RIGHT. MR. WRIGHT, YOU HAVE 14
20 DAYS FROM THE DATE OF THE JUDGMENT ORDER TO FILE ANY NOTICE
21 OF APPEAL. THANK YOU.

22 (HEARING CONCLUDED.)

23 I CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT TRANSCRIPT
24 FROM THE RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS IN THE ABOVE-ENTITLED MATTER.
S/KATHLEEN RICHARDSON

25 -----
KATHLEEN RICHARDSON, RMR, CRR

JUNE 12, 2019